

## **GIPSA Honors Employees Receiving USDA Secretary's Honor Award**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 19, 2007 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) Administrator James Link today recognized employees as recipients of the USDA Secretary's Honor Award. Employees from GIPSA's Business Practices and Resident Agent Units Team, located at its Midwestern Regional Office in Des Moines, Iowa, received a USDA 2007 Secretary's Honor Award. The team received the award from Acting Secretary Chuck Conner on Oct. 11, for their work in correcting illicit weighing practices in 28 livestock markets in 11 states.

"The Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards given by USDA and I'm proud of the hard work and dedication the GIPSA team showed while working to improve and enhance the competitiveness of the livestock industry," said Link.

GIPSA employees from the Midwestern Regional Office in Des Moines, Iowa, receiving the award for their work on the team were Bryce Wilke, William Arce-Arana, Gayle Barnett, Dewey Blatchford, Arlan DeBlieck, Adam Fast, Jerry Garner, Robert Merritt, Steve Pappaducas, Glenn Plumley, Terry Ryno, and Julie Shamblin.

The team members conducted compliance reviews at each of the 450 livestock markets in 11 states located in the Midwestern region. The reviews were initiated after determining that at least one auction market in the region was operating with scale gates that were not mounted on the platform of the scale as required for accurate weighing under the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) and regulations. When scale gates are not mounted to the platform inaccurate weighing will always occur, which results in lost revenue for the livestock sellers. The team found 28 scales that were not in compliance and gave the non-compliant markets time to take corrective action. The team then conducted follow-up investigations at each of the 28 markets, and all but three had corrected the problem. Investigative reports were subsequently prepared on these three markets for violations of the P&S Act.

"The team members were committed to stopping an illicit weighing practice that had existed for many years at several of the markets, " said Link. "Although no estimation has been made on the harm that might have occurred over time to livestock producers, it is likely to be several hundred thousand dollars per year. In addition, the team acted in an expeditious manner to correct the violations in a professional manner that further garnered the respect of the industry, livestock associations, and State weights and measures officials."

For a listing of all Honor Awards recipients, go to [www.usda.gov/documents/60thhonorawards.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/documents/60thhonorawards.pdf).

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